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UNH Receives Go-Ahead From NOAA For Pier Project

Passes Required Environmental Assessment With Flying Colors

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July 17, 2006

DURHAM, N.H. -- The University of New Hampshire will proceed with the construction of a new pier and pier support facility at New Castle, based on approval of a comprehensive Environmental Assessment (EA) required by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

The EA is part of a process that the federal government requires whenever federal funds are to be expended on a construction project that has the potential to significantly impact human, cultural, environmental or historic resources.

In mid-June, NOAA issued a "Finding of No Significant Impact" (FONSI) stating that UNH had shown due diligence in assessing all of the potential impacts of the project.

"This essentially clears the university to move forward through the final stages of planning for the project and, once that is complete, proceed with construction," said Jonathan Pennock, director of UNH's marine programs.

Next steps call for the university to work with the town of New Castle and the New Castle Planning Board to develop final plans for the project, and present these plans to the Planning Board later in the summer. Construction will begin this fall.

The project will replace the existing and condemned 500-foot Coast Guard pier at Fort Point with a 325-foot pier to be used for home porting the R/V Gulf Challenger and other university research vessels, as well as a new state-of-the-art NOAA hydrographic research vessel that will be used in partnership with the Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping and the Joint Hydrographic Center, a UNH/NOAA Cooperative Institute based at UNH.

It also includes the construction of a new pier support building that will support pier operations, a dive locker for university researchers, a work shop and storage.